

# VISION FORWARD



## IN PRAYER GOD TAKES US SERIOUSLY

Towards the end of May Elim Fellowship held their annual leadership conference. I believe I heard from the Lord there that we should devote the month of June to prayer. In particular, I believe we must pray for these three things:

- (1) The Desens House
- (2) signs and wonders
- (3) the salvation of the lost, coupled with our love for the lost

If you have a pen and paper or your device handy, please write this down: In prayer we

take *God* seriously and in prayer God takes *us* seriously.

As I've said and written recently, we are in a season of pruning. This pruning is for increased fruitfulness. If we pray for God to bear fruit in and through us, that's because we take Him seriously, we take Him at His word. But if we pray for God to bear fruit in and through us, that's because we want Him to take us seriously as well. And He will.

Personally, I don't want to be a trivial pastor and preacher, taking God and the things of God lightly. I want there to be a seriousness in my heart and ministry, a weight concerning God and the things He's called me to do. And I want to lead us to continue to be a church that

**takes** God seriously—a church that **God** takes seriously.

Let's be ready and willing though: If God takes us seriously, prayer will likely disrupt us, our habits, our schedules, our expectations.

Beginning in Matthew 9:18 we read, "*While* (Jesus) was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." *And Jesus rose and followed him*, with his disciples." (*Emphasis mine*) Jesus is interrupted and then interrupts what he himself was doing to go with the ruler.

We want Jesus to move, right? Well, while we're doing this or that, Jesus might come in and interrupt us. We don't know what His moving will look like, feel like, sound like. But does it matter as long as He is moving? Let His kingdom come to earth in Oswego, let His will be done here as in heaven.

So let's pray over the next 30 days for The Desens House: wisdom, endurance, resources, a house mom, favor—that it would be a dwelling place for the glory of God.

Pray over the next 30 days for signs and wonders: we want to see Jesus heal the sick; free the oppressed, the possessed, and the enslaved; dare I say raise the dead.

Pray over the next 30 days for the salvation of the lost: we want to see the lost come home, to be found by Jesus, transformed as we have been into new creations. But hand in hand with this we need to pray for our love for the lost, that it would grow and burst, washing away any selfishness, pride, judgment, and disrespect. We must, as Jesus did for Jerusalem, look on our city, our streets, our neighbors, and weep with compassion and yet rejoice with the hope of the Gospel.

In short, we pray over the next 30 days for Jesus to move in a bold, new, and fresh way. But let's beware our heart's motive in this. This is not that I nor you nor Elim Grace might become famous. If, for example, Pastor Kit from Reformed Presbyterian, or Pastor Verlyn from Oswego Alliance, Pastor Dick from New

Covenant, or any other local pastor said to me, "Jonathan, God is moving in our church," would I get up and go or would I become jealous and cynical? I hope and pray that I would long for Jesus and go! That you would long for Jesus! That we would long for Jesus, for the glory of His name, and not ours.

I hope and pray that Jesus will find in us, in Elim Grace, a safe place, a trustworthy people where He can freely pour out of His Spirit.

How you accomplish this is up to you, but a simple suggestion would be to take out your phone at some point during the day and just set a timer for 5 minutes and pray for these three things. When the timer goes off, you stop. You may find that 5 minutes will soon be too short. Remember, though, before how LONG we pray is important, THAT we pray is important.

So, will you join with me in 30 days of prayer?

## SUMMER SERIES SPECIAL

Our Summer Series Special this year is going to be on the topic of work. Now if you find preaching boring and you find work boring, then this series might not be for you! But I believe the topic of work is incredibly important to us. Why?

There are those in our midst who have retired or are retiring. They may feel displaced or without a sense of purpose. There are those who have lost their jobs and are discouraged or even depressed. There are those who are moving to a new job or career and are unsure about themselves. There are young couples who are looking but unable to find a new job. There are teens applying for or getting their very first job.

None of us can get away from work. But far from being a bad thing, something we feel we have to escape from, work is a good thing. Work is God's idea and creation; it's His plan to care for humanity and cultivate the earth; it's His gift to you and me. Work wasn't the result of sin entering the world. It was there at the

very beginning. It was part of what God saw and called good.

We're calling this series "Beauty & Dust: Finding meaning and satisfaction in your work".

Beauty because God created you to work and to find joy, meaning, and satisfaction in what you do, how you do it, and why you do it. We've all gone to bed at night feeling like we contributed something important in and through our work.

Dust because sin has entered the world and often our work struggles, the conditions of our work are difficult, things break down we are trying to build. We all go to bed at night feeling like we accomplished nothing and are having no impact on anyone in and through our work.

I will open this series and we will see that our work matters to God and that God matters to our work. In the second part on beauty, Pastor Bill will help us see how we can find joy and satisfaction in our work, whatever it is, wherever we are. Pastor Bill has worked across many fields, including the arts, finding joy there.

In the third part on dust, I have invited Marji Stevens to come share with us. Marji has twice been our guest at the women's conferences we have hosted at Elim Grace. She is a gifted communicator and full of the Spirit. She will help us see how we often face futility and emptiness in our work, but that even then and even there we can discover meaning and satisfaction.

Finally, I will conclude the series with a practical sermon on what to ask when considering a new job or vocation.

I hope that you see the value for yourself in this sermon series, but not only for yourself, for someone you know.

So here's my challenge to us: over the next four weeks leading up to the series, I want us to consider which friend we'd like to invite to church. This is a topic that is relevant to everyone. Especially as we all tend to work to find our identity and security in our work. We all need to discover that the work underneath our

work is something that Jesus has already finished. So, four weeks to invite one friend.

## **WE CELEBRATE OUR VOLUNTEERS**

Our Volunteer Celebration Event was a huge success! Malcolm Huggins and his wife, Heather, along with Brendan and Leah Doherty, did an excellent job at organizing and running this event. It was an effort on our part as Elim Grace to show appreciation to our amazing volunteers.

If you weren't able to be there, let me say this again loud and clear: We are better with you than we would be without you.

THANK YOU to all of our volunteers who give themselves each and every week to welcome and serve others.

Are we ready for what's next? What God has done up till now has been in and through you. And what God is about to do will be in and through you. It's a blessing and my joy to be able to work, pray, laugh, and have fun together with you along the way.

If you want to join a volunteer team and be a part of what God is doing in Elim Grace, you can easily sign-up at Guest Services during any of our weekend services.

## **HAVE YOU JOINED OUR ELIM GRACE FACEBOOK GROUP?**

At Elim Grace, we believe the church isn't a building—it's people.

We're a community of people just like you meeting each week to worship, learn, serve, and pray together. But one hour for a Saturday or Sunday service isn't enough. We believe the other 167 hours of our week are just as important. So Elim Grace Church Online is a place where we can continue to meet, talk, and pray together.

Why we have our Facebook group:

Our mission is "together, to know Jesus and to make Him known". We're followers of Jesus and we seek to lead others to become fully devoted followers. We know that God created us to live life not alone, but together in community. Facebook is a great place to meet people and learn more about God.

We believe in starting right where you are. You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to have all the right answers. You are welcome here.

## UPCOMING SUMMER READING LIST

Are you building a summer reading list? Here is a list, in no particular order, of books I've read (or reread) so far this year and would recommend:

1. Magnificent Journey (James Bryan Smith)
2. Franklin and Winston (Jon Meacham)
3. Incarnation (Athanasius)
4. Christian Reflections (CS Lewis)
5. The Four Loves (CS Lewis)
6. The Man Christ Jesus (Bruce Ware)
7. Leadership In Turbulent Times (Dorothy Kearns Goodwin)

8. The God Who Became Human (Graham A. Cole)
9. The Meaning Of Marriage (Tim Keller)
10. Switch (Chip & Dan Heath)
11. Five Dysfunctions Of A Team (Patrick Lencioni)
12. Eternity Is Now In Session (John Ortberg)
13. How (Not) To Be Secular (James K.A. Smith)
14. Chasing Excellence (Ben Bergeron)
15. Mindset (Carol Dweck)
16. Never Split The Difference (Chris Voss)
17. The Great Omission (Dallas Willard)
18. The Truth About Employee Engagement (Patrick Lencioni)
19. Letters Of CS Lewis (CS Lewis)
20. Letters To Malcolm (CS Lewis)
21. Letters To An American Lady (CS Lewis)
22. Turning The Flywheel (Jim Collins)
23. Effective Executive (Peter Drucker)
24. Atomic Habits (James Clear)
25. Every Good Endeavor (Tim Keller)
26. Leadershift (John Maxwell)
27. The Faith Of Jesus Christ (Richard Hays)
28. Miracles (CS Lewis)
29. Incarnation (Thomas Torrance)
30. Meaningful Work (Shawn Askinosie)
31. The Call (Os Guinness)

NOTE: I don't endorse all the content in these books. I read to learn. You learn from what you both agree with *and* disagree with.



**“We are better with you than we would be without you”**

*Volunteer Celebration Event,  
June 1, 2019, Camp Hollis*